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Factors that Influence Classroom Engagement

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Action Research Final Project of

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ABSTRACT

Factors that Influence Classroom Engagement

Tracy Lynn Wilk

June 21, 2010

Action Research Project

In schools throughout the country, students are not engaged in classroom learning. When students not engaged in the classroom, they become disenchanted with the entire school experience, which may eventually lead them to drop out of school before their high school graduation. There are groups of students who are at higher risk for dropping out of school early. Students who receive special education services are among some of those who are at risk for dropping out of school. I had often encountered students who were not engaged in the classroom and I did not want my students to become dropout statistics. As a result, I decided to research ways to increase classroom engagement among my own students.

In order to keep my research manageable in terms of finding ways to increase classroom engagement, I decided to focus on the learning styles and whether or not teaching to those learning styles increased classroom engagement for my group of five students who received Special Education Services at a local urban middle school in the Midwest. I reviewed literature on reading strategies for students with disabilities, learning styles and struggling students, drama based instruction and school connectedness. I created a design plan for the study and recruited participants.

Once permission was given by parents and students, the study began. Data were collected through participant observation in the classroom, interviews, surveys, and completed lesson plan assignment and scoring rubrics. I found from the data that there was an importance for active learning in the classroom; there was a need for school connectedness; students had a lack of understanding and evaluation of their own learning. Based on my findings, I make recommendations for teachers to have greater active learning opportunities in the classroom, for schools to build stronger relationships between the school staff and students and for teachers to teach students how to self-evaluate their own work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a crisp October day, a seventh and eighth grade teacher who services students with a wide array of disabilities walks into his resource classroom ready to start a new poetry unit. He walks in and scans the room. One boy is sitting with his chair tilted backwards. His arms are folded behind his head and his eyes are closed. Another student is sitting in a chair with a pencil in each hand drumming on the desk top as he gazes out a nearby window. A girl sits with her head lying on the desk. Her hair is brushed forward covering her face and making her look like a sleeping “Cousin It” Two other students sitting in a back corner engage in conversation.

“Good morning students”, says the teacher.

“Morning,” says one student.

“Hey,” says another. The other students do not respond and only look vaguely in the teacher’s direction.

“Lets get started shall we,” says the teacher. A sigh here and a yawn there tell the teacher all he needs to know. The teacher is used to this routine. It happens every day of the week. He walks into the room. The bell rings. Students take little notice.

The students take out their composition notebooks and place them on their desks. A girl with hair covering her face brushes the locks aside and opens the notebook. The boy tilting his chair does not change his posture.

“Now, upon reviewing our introduction paragraphs, there are some places where improvements need to be made,” says the teacher. One of the boy’s suddenly puts his shoe

across his thigh and with his ballpoint pen, begins to create an array of geometric shapes on the sole, as a fellow peer looks on.

“Hey man, check it out,” says the boy who is drawing. His peer nods and smiles at the artwork in approbation.

The teacher continues on with his lecture and once he has finished, speaking, he hands out a worksheet. One of the girl's who is sitting in the back corner continues to file her nails. The teacher notices this, as well as the other students who have not been paying attention. He feels confused. He feels he has tried everything. What else could he possible do?

The purpose of this study

A scene such as the one above is not so unusual in today's classrooms. I have experienced it in my own classroom at times. The problem with is that these students have demonstrated their lack of enthusiasm and engagement in the classroom. When students are not engaged and enthused in the classroom, they are not learning. This is important because students should be engaged in the classroom and students who are engaged are learning and being successful. Successful students get good grades and have good attendance, they do better on standardized tests, and they are more likely to graduate on time. Public schools are increasingly coming under scrutiny when it comes to overall student academic achievement. Students are expected to perform at a specific level on norm-referenced standardized testing. How students perform on these tests is shared with the general public (Klein, 2006; Frost, 2007) and it is an expectation that students perform well on these tests in order to graduate from high school. In order for these expectations to be met, a solid foundation for student engagement in learning in the classroom must occur. Second, students who are not engaged in the classroom learning

experience become disengaged in school and risk dropping out before their high school graduation (Baudoin, 1999; Ross, 2007; Niesyn, 2009). Certainly teachers want to see all of their students engaged and involved in learning on a daily basis, as opposed to having to work through a scene such as the one in the beginning of this chapter. The question then becomes how do teachers really improve their students' engagement in the classroom. Is there one approach to doing this or are there many approaches?

In this study, I examine a variety of approaches that can be used in order to increase student engagement in the classroom. I knew that it would not be possible to examine every approach that could be used, so as my research began to take shape and progress, I narrowed my focus as based on a select few guiding questions. These questions are:

1. Does student engagement in the classroom increase when students are taught according to their preferred learning modality or style?
2. Does allowing for choice between learning activities increase student engagement?
3. Does allowing for movement and change of pace increase student engagement in the classroom?
4. Are there factors about the students themselves which impact classroom engagement?

I should note that these questions developed throughout the course of my research from the data collected and were not so readily obvious at the onset of the project. However, it is important to note that my original research question was is there a relationship between teaching to specific learning styles of students and those students' success in reading for seventh and eighth graders who receive Special Education Services? However, as the study began and data was being collected, the idea of classroom engagement and what impacts it began to emerge.

This study on factors that impact classroom engagement was conducted at the urban middle school where I completed my student teaching experience in special education, and where I continued to work as a classroom volunteer within the special education department afterwards.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review centers on the following areas: reading strategies for students with disabilities, learning styles and struggling students, school connectedness and learner centered practices. There were reasons why those areas were chosen. First, classroom management and learning styles were critical to the study. Second, students participated in a reading unit based on school district curriculum for this study.

Reading Strategies for Students with Disabilities

I chose to review literature that covered reading strategies for students with disabilities because participants in this study completed reading lessons for each class session during the research phase. In addition, reading was also the subject area which they focused most on in their resource class. While some students were below grade level readers, others were not; however, It was the school district's policy to ultimately increase these students' reading performance overall on standardized tests; therefore, these students were given additional reading instruction. In addition, I wanted to know of any specific strategies which could have possibly been used in the lessons students were to complete during our sessions. First, I reviewed general strategies for reading improvement. Second, I reviewed specific strategies involving the use of drama and reading improvement and this is what led me to incorporate the use of drama based activities into the reading lessons.

There was a vast array of research addressing ways to improve reading skills for students with disabilities (Jackson, 1993; Zollers, 1998; Grant, 2003; Guthrie, 2003; Hammill, 2004;

Arthaud, 2006; Dunn, 2006; Santa, 2006; Swanson, 2006; BiFuh Ambe, 2007; Peebles, 2007; Cutting, 2008, Jenkins, 2009). I chose to review a few of the research studies available below.

In Allinder's (2001) study, researchers investigated how to improve reading fluency with at-risk students, who had a specific learning disability in the area of reading. Reading fluency was the speed and accuracy at which a reader reads a passage. One group of students was given specific strategies on how to improve fluency while another group was only encouraged to do well. The group that was given a set of strategies made greater gains on standardized testing than those who were not given specific strategies.

In a similar study done by Kuhn (2005), researchers focused on the effectiveness of repeated and non-repeated reading strategies on reading fluency in a small group setting in a second grade classroom. Repeated reading is the process by which students read the same piece of material multiple times. In terms of non-repetitive reading, or wide reading, the focus was on the story as whole rather than the specific sound combinations. The repetitive and non-repetitive groups were the experimental group. A control group was set up using traditional reading methods. Three second grade classrooms in a low-income school in the Southeast participated in this study. Texts that students read were from the high first grade through second grade instructional level. Both the control group and the experimental groups were given the same texts. Pre and post tests were administered.

The experimental groups showed greater gains than the control group in terms of improvement of word recognition. In terms of overall reading comprehension, the non-repetitive, wide reading, experimental group showed greater gains than the repetitive reading group and the control group. Kuhn (2005) noted "repeated readings are better at certain aspects

of literature curriculum; whereas non-repetitive readings are better at aiding in the development of others” [areas of reading improvement] (p.142). Additionally, the author suggested that” reading strategies such as echo and choral reading of a variety of texts may prove more effective for students who need support when it comes to both constructing meaning from text and improving mechanics of their oral reading fluency” (Kuhn, 2005, p. 142).

Additionally, Torgeson (2001) also investigated ways to improve reading skills for students with disabilities. However, researchers in this study focused on ways to improve word recognition skills among students. Word recognition was the student’s ability to look at a word and immediately recognize the word and say it with no strained effort. Torgeson (2001) had participants divided into two groups. One group of students was taught word recognition by a direction instruction method approach, where students immediately say a word after the teacher has said the word. The other was teaching through an auditory discrimination approach where students were asked to leave out parts of compound words and then immediately they were asked what the new word was. For example, a student was given the word outdoor and then asked if the word out is taken away, what was the new word. In this study, those taught with the direct instruction approach scored higher on standardized testing.

In a similar study done by Shippen (2005), researchers investigated the effects of two different Direct Instruction reading programs on overall reading achievement for middle school students who either had learning disabilities in the area of reading or who were struggling in the area of reading. Students who participated in the Direct Instruction Program were at least two grade levels behind in reading. One of the Direct Instruction Programs, called Direct Instruction Corrective Reading, focused on overt decoding strategies, while the other Direct Instruction Program, called, REWARDS, focused on more covert decoding strategies. Decoding skills in

the area of reading was the ability for a student to be able to apply their knowledge of letter and sound relationships and then say a word correctly orally.

In a Direct Instruction based reading program students were taught in small groups, where students gave a response and received immediate feedback. For this study a total of one hundred and ten students participated and then were divided randomly into one of the two groups. Students were given pre and post tests. After six weeks of participation, students showed gains overall reading skills no matter what Direct Instruction program was used. According to Shippen (2005), this study did confirm the effectiveness of “highly structured, explicit, teacher-directed instruction for struggling readers” (p. 180).

Research indicated that there were some general strategies that were used to increase reading improvement for students who struggle or have disabilities in the area of reading. Many of those strategies focused on decoding skills and reading fluency. However, I also wanted to review other strategies that may help to improve students’ overall engagement with reading in the classroom while also meeting their own learning style needs. I looked to drama as a means of doing this. There were a number of studies on the effects of drama in the classroom (Hoyt, 1992; Pirie, 1995; Cornet, 2003; Peebles, 2007; Sayers-Adomat, 2009) most of which was geared toward individual classrooms. My students participated in drama-based activities for this study; I decided to review literature specifically on the use of drama-based instruction in the classroom.

In a study done by Brinda (2008), a sixth grade middle school reading teacher, who taught students who struggled with reading, investigated three questions which were crucial to her classroom practice. Those questions were:

1. What causes students to dislike books in school?
2. What theory based techniques could activate students' interests, sustain their curiosities and engage them in literature?
3. How significantly can the experiences of preparing for and watching theatrical adaptation of literature transform the reading skills and attitudes of reluctant readers (p. 490)?

In order to determine the answer to these questions, the teacher used three different strategies to implement throughout her literature unit. One strategy was to turn the novel being read into a theatrical production. In order to do this, students were divided up and put on production teams. Each team had several roles that needed to be filled. The roles for each team were: director, actors, set designer, sound designer, and costume designer. Students chose which role they wanted as they read the book *A Wrinkle in Time*. According to Brinda (2005), the students "became a team of creative artists who brought literature to life through sketches, models and readings of the text" (p. 491), when they worked on production teams. Tests and worksheets were given once this strategy was finished.

The second strategy was based on drama rehearsal strategies used in theater. Students were put into roles of actors and directors. Then, they discussed plot, character revelations and any confusion on vocabulary or any other concepts they had. Again, tests and worksheets were given once this strategy was finished. All students scored ninety percent or better on all tests and worksheets from both the first and second strategies.

The third strategy had students watch a theatrical production of the literature piece they were reading. Students were also given tests after watching the theatrical production. All students were given a unit test after the novel was completed. Overall, fourteen of sixteen

students passed the unit test with scores of eighty percent or better. Twelve students continued to read additional books and ten students significantly improved their reading grades.

A study done by Rose (2000) attempted to determine if drama-based techniques could improve students' overall reading comprehension. Reading comprehension was considered the ability to understand and make meaning out of what was being read. Four elementary schools in the Chicago area chose to participate in this study. One of the schools was chosen at random to be the control group and the remaining three were in the experimental group. The experimental group was taught reading with the use of drama based instructional methods, where the students would work with assistance of drama artists and dramatize the text being read. The control group was taught with the use of traditional reading instructional methods, where they completed the standard reading curriculum. Additionally, both groups were given the IOWA Tests of Basic Skills in order to determine if there was any improvement. The experimental group "increased their test scores from pre to post test by 9.55 points. The control group increased by 2.88 points" (p. 58). This study suggested that drama based instruction is highly effective for improving reading comprehension for students.

A non-empirical journal article, done by Maples (2007), indicated that a Middle School English teacher used drama-based activities on a regular basis in her classroom. She stated that "Drama activities are beneficial in the English classroom because they are adaptable for all ages and ability levels" (Maples, 2007, p. 273). This teacher began each school year by having students do several improvisation activities. One of those activities was a Tableau, which was a frozen picture of a moment in time from the reading which students acted out. In this strategy, Maples (2007) stated "Students formed groups and created a frozen picture, using all group members to represent the scene, and event, or location from a literary work" (p. 274). The groups

of students then presented their tableau to the entire class. An additional activity that was used was to pair students up to speak in front of the entire class. The pairs were asked to create a scene by speaking only in gibberish. In order to do this activity, students needed to have a strong understanding of the plot of the material they are reading. These types of activities, according to Maples (2007), helped students have a better comprehension of the material they were reading.

Research on drama based instructional practices was not only found in the area of reading, but it was also found in the area of mathematics. This was worth noting because it suggested that drama based instruction could be used across the curriculum. In a study by Asuman (2009), researchers investigated the effects of drama based instruction on seventh grade students' overall geometry achievement in Ankara Turkey. In this study there was one control group, which was taught with traditional mathematic instructional methods and one experimental group, which was taught with drama based instructional methods. In order to determine overall achievement in geometry, researchers developed two of their own testing measures in addition to using one standardized testing measure. Of the two tests that were developed, one was called The Angles and Polygons Achievement Test, and the other was called The Circle and Cylinder Achievement Test. In addition to those two tests, The Van Hiele Geometric Thinking Level Test was used. Researchers also interviewed students in each of the groups. The results showed that there was a statistical difference between the two groups with the experimental group scoring higher on post tests than the control group. The findings confirmed "that drama-based instruction had a statistically significant impact on students' achievement with angles and polygons and with circles and cylinders in comparison with traditional teaching" (Asuman, 2009, p. 202).

In summary, literature was reviewed for both general strategies for overall reading improvement for students with disabilities or for those who did not have specific disabilities in

the area of reading or for those who generally struggled with reading. Additionally, I reviewed literature on how drama-based activities were implemented into the reading curriculum. These studies pointed to the idea that active involvement of students in the classroom was important and this helped to guide my own study in incorporating active learning in the classroom environment. I also found it was helpful that the importance of active involvement was demonstrated in learning to do geometry because this showed that active involvement can be generalized to other subject areas.

Learning Styles and Struggling Students

This project set out to determine how to increase student engagement in the classroom. I believed that in order to determine how to increase student engagement in the classroom, I needed to investigate the role learning styles had on student engagement in the classroom. I knew from working with my students that they each learned differently. Also, in general, teachers have an understanding that no two students absorb and retain information the same way. This different way of absorbing and retaining information is referred to as a learning style (Dunn, Dunn & Price, 1997; Heffler, 2001; Van Klaveren, 2002; Brand, 2002; Farkas, 2003). Although, I was aware that my students learned differently, I needed a reliable way to measure that difference. There are formal ways in which differences in learning style can be measured (Heron, 1994; Glasgow, 1996; Fritz, 2002). In the late 1960s, Drs. Kenneth and Rita Dunn created the Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ), which was an instrument used to formally measure the individual learning differences in students (Price, 1997). That questionnaire was eventually redeveloped over time into The Learning Style Inventory (LSI). In short, the LSI helps to determine the conditions under which a student is most likely to learn, remember, and achieve (Dunn, Dunn & Price, 1997). Those conditions under which students are likely to learn

are considered learning style preference. There are three common types of learning preferences that students may have; auditory preferences, visual preferences and kinesthetic preferences (Dunn, Dunn & Price, 1997, Burris, et.al., 2008). If a student has auditory learning preferences, it means that he prefers to learn by using audiotapes, discussion, oral directions and lectures. If a student has visual preferences, it means that he prefers to learn through, pictures, filmstrips, graphs, books, magazines, or anything that requires seeing. If a student has kinesthetic learning preferences, it means that he learns best through projects, acting, games and field trips (Dunn, Dunn & Price, 1997).

I did want to know the conditions under which my students were most likely to learn because I had assumed that those conditions would impact their engagement in the classroom. With this in mind, I began my research into this area focusing on learning style preferences of struggling students and in particular students who received special education services. Special education services can be described as specialized educational needs that a student who has a disability may need because the disability impacts that student's overall educational progress.

In Braio (1997) researchers investigated whether or not three groups of students had different or similar learning styles and whether teaching them according to their learning style increased their academic performance. One group of students had disabilities and they also received special education services. The second group of students did not have disabilities nor did they receive special education services, but rather they were part of the general student population who were not doing well in school. This group was considered the low achieving group. The third group of students did not have disabilities, but rather, they were students who did very well in school or were considered to be high achievers and gifted. Braio (1997) noted that the learning styles of "special education and regular education low-achieving students tend

to be essentially similar, but they differ substantially from the high achievers and the gifted” (p. 15). In addition, he noted, “many students indicated multiple learning style preferences” (Braio, 1997, p. 15). It was difficult to classify students as having one particular style that fit them best in terms of their own learning. The conclusion for this author was that “teaching special education students and regular education low achievers’ through their learning style preferences resulted in improved academic achievement” (Braio, 1997, p. 26). However, there was a more gradual gain in academic improvement for the students who were low achievers than there were for those who received special education services.

A similar study done by Brand, Dunn, & Greb (2002) indicated that struggling students did “achieve statistically higher standardized achievement test scores in both reading and math when they were taught with approaches and resources that complimented their learning styles” (Brand, Dunn & Greb, 2002, p. 268). These authors focused their research on students with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and the preferred learning styles for students with this disorder. Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder was referred to as ADHD. This disorder caused students to have a difficult time paying attention and staying focused on the topic at hand, controlling behavior due to impulsivity, and causing them to be overactive. Students with Attention Deficit and Hyper Activity Disorder, according to Brand, Dunn & Greb (2002), had “very different learning styles—as do many youngsters who cannot learn traditionally” (p. 273). Their different learning styles were that they preferred more tactile and hands-on learning as opposed to traditional students who had more auditory and visual learning preferences. The authors recommend that teachers experiment with the following strategies: teaching difficult material in the afternoon, use tactile and kinesthetic resources, and using soft lighting (Brand, Dunn & Greb, 2002). In addition, other studies (Carlson, et.al. 2002; Bennett,

et. al., 2006) have also reached similar conclusions on students who have ADHD and that they do indeed have different learning style preferences.

A study by, Fine (2003), researched the differences of learning styles between high school students who received special education services and students who did not receive special education services. He wanted to know what the impact would be of implementing learning style instructional strategies in science class for those students who received special education services. What the author discovered was that there were “significantly different learning style traits, preferences, and strengths [that] were revealed between students in special education and regular education” (Fine, 2003, p. 55). Additionally, Fine (2003), concluded that when the students were taught according to their learning style strengths in the science class, there was an overall “improvement in students’ achievement, behavior, and lateness to class”(p. 55). There was no improvement in these areas when students were taught in ways that differed from their learning style strengths. Fine (2003), observed throughout the study that:

A positive culture that was established through the accommodation of the students’ learning style strengths. A mutual respect between the teaching and learning process was strengthened, and the students appreciation of each other improved” (p. 56).

In summary, research showed that it was best to accommodate learning style preferences among students who struggle and/or have disabilities.

School Connectedness

One of the major themes that emerged during this study was the students’ need for school connectedness. When using the term school connectedness, I refer to it as whether students felt

as if they were a part of their school and whether they felt they had meaningful relationships with the staff and administration (McNeely, 2002; Seita & Brentro, 2003; Rubin, 2004; Ashworth & Van Bocken, 2008). Some of the ways in which students demonstrate school connectedness is by taking part in extra-curricular activities and by having a sense of pride about their school. Here is the review of some of the literature on school connectedness.

A study done by McNeely (2002) researched ways in which schools could increase connectedness. This study gathered data from a representative sample of students in grades 7-12 from multiple school districts within a large metropolitan area of the southeast. The data collection methods were an in-school questionnaire completed by students and questionnaires about school policies, procedures, teacher characteristics and student body characteristics completed by administrative personnel. Responses to questionnaires were completed on a likert scale format. Questions that specifically measured school connectedness were “I feel close to people at this school, teachers at this school treat students fairly, I feel safe in my school, I feel like I am a part of this school” (Mc Neely, 2002, pg. 140). This study revealed that school connectedness was lower in schools where there were classroom management difficulties. Connectedness was also lower in schools which had strong discipline policies for minor offenses. Students in schools with harsher policies indicated that they felt less safe while at school. Additionally, McNeely (2002) found that “connectedness was higher in racially segregated schools” (p. 145). Students in smaller schools showed a tendency to feel more connected to their schools. Students who participated in extra-curricular activities as well as, those who received better grades, also felt more connected to their school. According to McNeely (2002), “classroom management climate, school size, and severity of discipline policy” (p. 145) are factors that can be changed in order to increase overall school connectedness.

In a similar study done by Brown (2005), the researcher focused on extra-curricular participation rates among students of various ethnic backgrounds and what was the relationship between participation and the students' level of school connectedness in two East Bay California School Districts. Ethnic groups whose extracurricular participation rates were examined were European Americans, Hispanic Americans, African Americans and Asian Americans. The student population that attended these school districts came from both urban and suburban areas. One thousand seven hundred and thirty nine secondary students were sampled. Measurements were taken via a survey. School connectedness items were measured with sixteen questions. The general results were that those students who participated in extra- curricular activities had higher levels of school connectedness. And, those students who were African-American or Hispanic had a stronger sense of school connectedness while participating in fewer hours of extra-curricular participation overall when compared to European American students. Additionally, Brown (2005) noted that “. . .those students who participated in non-school based extra-curricular activities, such as, scouts, 4-H, and Boys and Girls Clubs, had an even higher rate of school connectedness” (p. 15). Brown (2005) noted some strategies that could be used by schools to increase participation in extracurricular activities. They were as follows:

1. Increase parental and community involvement with schools.
2. Promote cultural diversity.
3. Address individual and group concerns.
4. Create successful outreach programs between schools and the community.

These four strategies, according to Brown (2005), would not only encourage extracurricular participation, but increase communities, schools and families working together. These three groups working together would increase school connectedness.

In Akos (2004), researchers examined whether or not race or gender were significant variables in students transitioning successfully to middle and high school, student feelings of connectedness to school and student perception of who was helpful during the transition time to the new school. The participants were selected from one middle school and one high school in an urban area of the southeastern United States. According to Akos (2004), at the middle school level a total of one hundred and seventy three students participated. Eighty three students were boys and eighty six students were girls. The racial backgrounds of the students was as followed: 57.2% were Caucasian, 19.7% were African American, 8.7% were Asian American, 8.1% were Latino, and 4.0% were multiracial (Akos, 2004, p. 103). In the high school sampling, three hundred and twenty ninth grade students participated and 48.7% were boys and 50.3% were girls. The racial backgrounds of these participants was as followed: 76.3% were Caucasian, 10.3% were African-American, 5.6% were Asian American, 4.3 % were Latino, and 2.2% were multiracial (Akos, 2004, p.103).

Researchers developed questionnaires on school transitions that used a four point Likert-type format. An additional questionnaire was developed to measure the school connectedness component. This was also done in a Likert-type format. Questions which specifically dealt with a feeling of school connectedness were if students felt: “(a) close to other students, (b), part of school, (c), that teachers care about students, (d) happy at school (Akos, 2004, p.104). The results from this study showed that gender had not been a significant variable in the overall difficulty of transitioning to middle or high school. Gender was a significant variable in determining who was most helpful in the transition period. Family was most helpful in this transition time. In terms of race, “no significant difference was found for race in feelings of

connectedness to school” (p.105). Additionally, Akos (2004) noted, “girls felt more connected to school than did boys after the transition to middle school” (p.106).

In summary, there were certain factors that impacted school connectedness. Students who participated in sports generally felt more connected to their school than those who did not. Schools that had strong discipline policies had students who felt less connected and finally, boys felt less connected to school after they transitioned to middle school. Overall this literature review looked at reading strategies for students with disabilities, learning styles and struggling students, and school connectedness. From this research I learned the importance of involving students who receive special education services in active learning strategies across all subject areas. I also learned the importance of students being connected to their school and how much that being connected can make a difference in students’ educational experiences. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology I used for this project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Framework

This study is based on ways to increase student engagement in the classroom. I chose to focus on the learning domains and the impact of teaching to those domains and whether or not this increase student engagement in the classroom. Students can learn in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of this study, learning domains and/ or learning preferences fall into three broad categories. Those categories are learning through visual means, learning through auditory means, and learning through kinesthetic means. My goal for completing this study is to improve my own teaching practices and to create a more learner centered classroom environment.

The form of research used in this study is action research. A formal definition is that action research “is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching / learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn” (Mills 2000, p. 5). Action research is a form of qualitative research (Colvin, 2009; Hahs-Vaughn, 2009; Ostorga, 2009). Qualitative research uses journaling, interviews, and participant observation as a means of data collection (Mills, 2000; Gould, 2008; Kosky, 2008; Ross-Fisher, 2008). All data in this study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected using interview transcripts, written surveys completed by students, lesson plan assignments, scoring rubrics, and my field notes.

The Setting

This study was conducted in an average sized middle school in a large urban setting in the Midwest. The middle school served students in grades seven through eight with a total student population of five hundred and seventy five and a teaching population of thirty six. The overall eighth grade student body numbered two hundred and fifty-four, while the seventh grade population numbered three hundred and twenty-one. Fifty-six percent of the school's population was male and forty-four percent was female. The ethnic distribution of the student body was as follows: American Indian was one percent, African American was twenty-four percent, Asian was fifty-eight percent, Caucasian was eight percent and Hispanic was ten percent. Eighty three percent of the total student population qualified for the free lunch program, while eight percent qualified for reduced lunch.

This middle school was considered a magnet school. Magnet schools offer specific areas of specialized study to their students. Technology was the specialty offered here. This school had an open enrollment policy, which meant that any middle school student could attend this school no matter where he or she lived in the city. Roughly fifty percent of student population lived within the school's working class urban neighborhood, while the remaining students were transported in from other neighborhoods within the city.

This study did not involve the entire student population, but rather, it centered on a smaller segment of students who were receiving special education services under the category of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. The total number of students receiving services in this category was forty-six. Two teachers licensed in Special Education provided services to these

students. Students received their services in a resource room setting from two to three days per week.

What a resource room actually looks like, and how it is used, can vary from school district to school district, and from state to state. Students who have specific academic needs in the area of reading or math can go to the resource room and get additional remedial help in these subject areas. In addition, a resource room can be used as a place to get extra help in a variety of academic subjects, or as a place to be able to retreat to in order to have separation from the high anxiety producing social situations of a traditional classroom.

In the resource rooms used for this study, students could go to extra help as needed, but also, it was district policy that an academic subject, on remedial level, was to be taught to students. My students received additional instruction in reading and writing. The school day operated on a day one, day two format. Students have a total of eight classes in any given semester. Each class is approximately 90 minutes long. On day one, which would be Monday, students will have classes one through four. Then on Tuesday, day two, students would have classes five through eight. Then Wednesday would revert back to day one. So during one typical school week, students would have their resource class on two days. Then the following week, they would have their resource class on three days.

The steps towards participation

I had asked the students in two resource room classes to participate voluntarily in the study. The total population in these two classes was twenty-two. The first step was to give students general information on the study, which I did through a casual discussion in the

classroom. In addition, students were given the formal written description packet about the study, which they used for reference as we had our discussion about what was going to take place throughout the study and what their participation would entail.

For the second step, interested volunteers were requested to take home the formal written description packet and the consent/assent form to their parents or guardians. I informed the volunteers that their parents or legal guardians were required to give permission in order for the students to be able to participate. Permission was given by both a student signature and parent or guardian signature on the consent/assent form. Five students and their parents signed the necessary forms and returned them to me. Each student was given a pseudonym and a corresponding number to ensure his or her anonymity.

Project design

Once consent and assent was obtained, along with local school district approval, I was able to move forward with part one of the study, which was to give each student the Dunn and Dunn Learning Style Inventory (LSI) for grades three through twelve 1996 (Prince, 1997). The LSI helps to determine the conditions under which a student is most likely to learn, remember, and achieve (Dunn & Dunn, 1996). In addition, the LSI also summarizes the environmental, emotional, sociological, and physical preferences of each of my students. However, there were certain conditions in the LSI that would be measured that I could not change or impact in the classroom setting. I decided that I could impact the auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning preferences of the participants and this became a focus in the study and a key to understanding to what degree learning styles impacted classroom engagement.

Once the learning profiles were taken, they were sent off to the publisher to be scored. When I had received the results, I was able to determine the best design format for my lessons for the next phase of the study. The results of the learning profiles indicated that none of my students was completely in one cognitive learning style over another, but rather they preferred learning with a combination of the three. Based upon this information, I decided to incorporate all three cognitive learning style preferences into each individual lesson plan. In addition, since no one student had one learning style strength, based solely on the profile, this reinforced the need to conduct interviews with the students after each lesson in order to gather more information on how they learned. With the LSI results in hand, and my lessons completed, I could move forward with the second phase of the study.

The second phase called for students to complete a reading curriculum unit (Johnston 2005). I created this unit based on the modified curriculum that the district used for its struggling readers. I chose the novel, *Call of the Wild* for the students to read. This book was chosen in part because of its adventure theme, which is of high interest among students. The book that the students read was an adapted version of the original classic, told in about 80 pages. Those pages were then divided into a total of twelve chapters. In addition, the curriculum unit for *Call of the Wild* came with an audiotape reading of the book.

I created a total of twelve lessons that corresponded with each chapter in the book. The detailed lesson plans containing the step by step procedure used for each session can be found in the appendices of the study. In general, each session went as follows. Students were given a paperback copy of the book. Students read one chapter per session, silently reading along, while an audio version played on the recorder. Once the chapter reading was completed, students were given three learning activities from which to choose. The learning activities were created so that

students could demonstrate overall comprehension of the reading material based upon learning style strengths. These activities were set up as “stations” within the classroom. Each station had its own area with instructions on what to do for each activity along with any necessary supplies. Students then went about completing their chosen task. There was no time limit for students to complete their activity.

Once the activities were completed, I sat down with each student and did an interview. I began each interview by asking the following questions:

1. What activity did you choose?
2. Why did you choose this activity?

From this point on, my questions were open-ended. This type of questioning allowed for me to let the student lead the interview. I was then able to ask follow up questions based on the information they were giving me. As students answered my questions, I wrote down their responses in my notebook and I also tape recorded their responses. This information became my field notes. The following is a sampling of each student’s learning profile and general information:

The Participants

There were a total of five students who chose to participate in this study. Here is a brief picture of each participant’s demographic information, along with his learning profile summary.

Mitch was thirteen years old and in seventh grade. Mitch was Caucasian. There were key factors that indicated how Mitch learned or preferred to learn. As a learner, Mitch preferred to study with other students rather than to study by himself. Mitch also preferred to learn in a

variety of ways. This meant that he did not have one cognitive learning preference over another, but learned with a combination of learning styles. One of the ways Mitch would learn best was if he were able to move around after sitting and working for fifteen to twenty minutes because he had a difficult time sitting in one place for long periods of time. Mitch did not have specific cognitive learning style strengths in the areas of visual learning, auditory learning or kinesthetic learning.

Aaron was fourteen years old and in eighth grade. Aaron was African-American. As a learner, Aaron did not have a cognitive learning style preference. Most factors that influenced Aaron were environmental aspects, which included preferences for dim light over bright light, which was irritating and uncomfortable for him. He preferred his learning environment was cool rather than warm. Aaron liked to finish one task before starting another. He preferred to learn in the afternoon rather than in the morning. Aaron did not need to get up and move around while he learned.

Wesley was thirteen years old and in seventh grade. Wesley was African-American. Like Aaron, Wesley did not have a cognitive learning style preference. Wesley found that when people talked to him it was very distracting and he did not remember verbal directions. Wesley felt he did his best work in the early morning.

Jasmine was thirteen years old and in seventh grade. Jasmine was African-American. Jasmine preferred to learn in a variety of ways. This meant that she did not prefer one cognitive learning style over another. She liked to learn both alone and with others. She did prefer to learn in the afternoon rather than the early morning. She liked to finish one task before starting another. She did prefer that the teacher give her a lot of detail as to how the assignment should be done. For instance, she wants to know how long the assignment should be and so on.

Julian was fourteen years old and in eighth grade. Julian was Caucasian. As a learner, Julian also preferred to study with other students rather than study by himself. Julian did have a specific cognitive learning style, which was kinesthetic learning. Julian learned best when provided with hands- on learning activities, which he could touch and handle as he learned. Activities which were strengths were writing, sketching and use of three dimensional shapes or objects. Julian also preferred whole body learning. This meant that he learned best when he was able to move around when learning. Some activities that meet this strength were field trips, drama, puppetry, and general action learning.

Data Analysis Strategies:

I began the data analysis process once I was at the point of saturation in my field notes. I analyzed the interviews and coded them. Coding is the process of finding patterns and meaning in data collected (Mills, 2003). I began the coding process by going through all my data and highlighting similar comments. Then I wrote those comments out on index cards. If a majority of the students had similar comments, I sorted those comments/cards into piles. These coded piles of cards led to themes that related to one another and became the basis for my findings.

The overall analysis for this study was done using grounded theory. Grounded theory focuses on comparative analysis and is defined as “the discovery of theory from data (Glasen & Strauss, 1967, p.1). In addition, such themes and codes were worked out in relation to the data during the research phase (Glasen & Strauss 1967).

Limitations

This study is based on my own experiences in the classroom. Those who participated in the study were students that I had known in some way via the resource room, through teaching or volunteer experience. Only those students with whom I had contact through these two means were recruited for participation. I needed to do this in order to keep the study manageable. This study, however, could be replicated by another teacher with the only change being to have a much larger sample pool of students in order to determine validity. In addition, my role as researcher, for this study, is combined with my role as teacher. I knew the students and had been working with them on a nearly daily basis and I did have a rapport with them; however, the rapport was not as good as what it would have been had I been their primary teacher. I knew some students better than others. None of this was necessarily negative; however, it did help to give my sampling a better mix with greater results. The five students who remained with study from beginning to end is not a representative sample of the entire student population I saw during my time at the school, or even the full number of students I had in my classes, but rather, they were the ones who were willing to participate.

In this chapter, I have described the framework of this study and what my overall goals are for it upon completion. In addition, I have described the urban setting in which the study takes place and the participants who willingly volunteered. Also discussed in this chapter were the study's overall design and phases of implementation. Finally, this chapter concluded with the data analysis strategies I used with allowed for the findings in the next chapter to come to light.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of this research which emerged throughout the data collection process. The findings are categorized into three major themes. These themes are: Active learning in the classroom, school connectedness and students thinking critically as learners.

“We got to get out of our seat and do stuff active.” The Importance of Active Learning in the Classroom

A theme that emerged from the data was the need for active learning in the classroom. Throughout this project, students did a plethora of kinesthetic-learning activities, which included hands-on activities, such as using modeling clay to recreate key items from specific chapters in the story, to participating in Charades, and creating tableaux.

In several class sessions, students participated in a kinesthetic learning activity that was often done at the beginning of class as an introduction. However, it also served as a review of learning from previously read chapters. In this activity, they were given a dry erase marker and then required to come to the front of the classroom and write on the whiteboard the main parts of novel that they remembered. I probed them about events in the novel as they were writing. Once we completed the respective class sessions, students shared their thoughts during the interview process. First, Wesley shared:

I liked it because I got to get up out of my seat and move. I like writin' on the board because like when you were a little kid, the goal was always to be able to go up to the board and write. I liked doin' that because I could get up and move.

Julian then shared, “I liked getting up out of my desk too. I liked it especially after we were

sitting for while writing in our journals.” Aaron continued, “Yeah, it’s hard to sit for a long time sometimes and being able to get up from my desk is good. Then I don’t get so bored.” He then added, “That’s why I like science a lot because we get to move around and make stuff.”

Jasmine continued, “I liked getting up from my desk, but I liked writing on the board more. I like to write on the board or on paper. I like to work with my hands to keep them moving. I like my writing to be perfect.” Mitch validated the others by sharing, “I liked getting out of my desk just to move around, but not the writing on the board because I don’t like to write. Just writing is boring. I did like getting out of my desk.” Additionally, Wesley shared:

I liked all of the stuff we did today. We got to get out of our seat and do stuff that’s active because I just like getting out of my seat and doing stuff that is active instead of just sitting in my seat all day cause I know I can get out of my seat and I aint gotta worry about being bad or nothing. Well, not being bad, but like getting into mischief, like not paying attention.

Mitch then added “Yeah, I like cooking class and gym ‘cause I don’t feel trapped in one place ‘cause I can move around. I feel trapped in my desk if I can’t move around.” Additionally, he shared, “I like to move around a lot.” Julian added, “That’s why I like science because we can do experiments and stuff. When we do experiments and build things, we can move around. I just like to move. I can’t not move. I can’t just sit still.”

Clearly, students felt that movement and hands on learning made their overall learning of the material much more meaningful and enjoyable.

Additional kinesthetic learning activities were planned and carried out throughout the course of this study. Among them, were several drama based activities. One drama activity in

particular was called a character enactment. In the enactment, students were to choose a character from the novel. Then a stool was placed in front of the room. Students were required to go and sit on the stool. Then I posed a question to them and they were required to respond to that question in a manner in which their chosen character would answer it. Here are the students' responses to that enactment. First Wesley shared, "I like the enactment. I was able to move around and when I got out of my seat it was easier to think about what I was gonna say. It was fun." Jasmine adds "I liked it because I was able to move my hands a lot. I talk with my hands." Julian continued, "I liked it because I could move around more and do something different because our classes are so long."

In addition to the enactment, students completed a plethora of drama based activities that included tableaux, charades, and simple role-plays. During most class sessions, students had the opportunity to choose which learning activity they were going to complete after the chapter reading for the session. The following are comments made by students who chose some of those drama based kinesthetic activities on a consistent basis. After completing charades and a simple role play, Wesley shared, "I like doing role-plays and stuff like that because you get to talk and basically it's just giving you permission to get out of your seat and do something that's fun." He continued by saying, "When we did the role-plays, we get to move around and act. I like that." Then Julian added, "I like role-play. You get to move around more. I like to move around and act, like with that enactment thing we did. I am really good at being in front of an audience because I used to do plays." Jasmine continued:

I never did a play, but I was in the school musical at my old school.

That's kind of acting. I like acting because it's fun and not like real work.

Real work is like writing and doing worksheets and stuff.

Mitch then added, "I like acting too. I can move around more when I can act. I liked the Charades too. It was fun and I didn't have to write." Aaron explained, "Role-plays are fun. I like Charades because it was fun to have people guess what I was doing. I like doing stuff that is fun. Writing and reading stuff isn't fun."

Students gave their input into the active learning elements of the class sessions. Active learning can have different looks in the classroom. Drama activities can also be done in different ways. Students responded openly to these activities. The theme of active learning in the classroom developed throughout the course of the study and it was clear that movement versus seat work was considered an important element of their learning.

"It's boring. I think it's a waste of my eight hours a day!" Need for School Connectedness

Another theme that emerged from the collection of the data was the lack of school connectedness. By school connectedness, I refer to students feeling or being connected to their school. Throughout this project, I interviewed students near the conclusion of each session. I began each interview with common questions relating to the activities they had completed. I let the students own answers and general comments guide the interview. It was in this manner of interviewing that the lack of school connectedness theme emerged.

During one of Mitch's interview sessions, he was asked if he liked school. His reply was, "No. It's boring. I think it's a waste of my eight hours a day! I could be home sleeping right now." He commented on how he would have learned to read if he were home sleeping all day, by saying:

I could just learn it myself. I don't need teachers to teach me when I can just learn it myself. My friend goes to [another middle school]. I want to go there next year because I want to hang out with my friends.

Meanwhile, Jasmine shared, "Sometimes, I like school. I like that I get to see my friends." Julian then also added, "Yeah, It's alright. I can see my friends." Then Aaron continued, "Only sometimes I like school. I like being with my friends." Wesley also shared, "I guess I like school because I like to talk to my friends and play basketball in the gym." I continued to probe with my questioning a bit further in order to get a better understanding as to what it really was about school that they sometimes did not like. By doing the additional probing, students began to share more of their thoughts. When asked if they liked teachers, Jasmine shared, "No, I don't like teachers." When asked why she did not like teachers, she responded, "I just don't like teachers." She paused and then continued:

I don't trust nobody here. All they do is tell people and then people call my house or whatever, and people tell other people about my business. Teachers here, I don't trust them. Like with my sister. Some teacher think she was all depressed. Then some counselor call my house about it. How's it their business? It sure aint! That's what I mean.

Jasmine then asked me "Do you got kids?" I responded, "No, I don't have any children." She said "You probably don't like kids." She explained why she thought this by saying, "Teachers don't like kids. That's why they teach and like to get into other people's business. My third grade teacher from when I lived in Mississippi was like that." Julian also shared his thoughts on teachers. He responded:

Sometimes I like teachers. It just depends on who the teacher is and how they act.

I don't like teachers who send students out of the room for no reason cause they are just taking advantage of that power they have to send students out of the room.

I like teachers who are honest and at least give students a chance. Some teachers here are honest and some just send kids out of the room for no reason.

Mitch then continued by saying:

No, I don't like teachers. I got held back 5th grade because of my teacher. The teacher hated me because I was annoying. I thought he was gonna lose his job cause a lot of the teachers lost their jobs, but not him.

Mitch was then asked if there were any teachers at the school that he trusted. He replied, "Nope." Then he motioned his head in the direction of his special education teacher and said, "Can't trust her at all." He explained why could not trust her, "She always tells them in the office when I say stuff about other people, or if I say I'm gonna do something to somebody. I get in trouble even if I was just messin' around." Next Aaron added to the discussion about teachers.

He responded:

I only sometimes like teachers. I like Ms. Smith [his special education teacher].

She's nice and understanding. Otherwise I don't have any teachers that I like.

They're always trying to calculate. Be cocky. Give me detention for no reason. Like yesterday I was walking in the hallway and I walked by this kid and put my hands around my throat. My social studies teacher saw it and gave me detention.

Aaron pauses and looks intently into the distance. He continued, “They have to get to know me. They have to get to know about my background to get to know me.” Wesley also shared his thoughts about teachers, “I like some teachers. I guess I like the ones that are fun the most.” When questioned about what he meant by teachers that are the most fun, he responded, “Teachers that give you fun things to do instead of always sitting in our seat and writing stuff.” He commented about teachers he did not like:

I don’t like teachers when they call my mom whenever I am doing something bad.

Like last year when I got detention three days in a row for being disruptive or whatever the teacher call it, my mom came to school and stayed with me for an entire day and followed me around. Why should I get detention ‘cause I like to talk? That’s why I got detention because the teacher didn’t like that I was talkin’ in class. Teachers get me in trouble. Then I got in trouble when “Jordan” slapped me in the back of my neck so I followed him and slapped him back. Mr. Smith saw that. I got in trouble for that too.

Wesley shared his thoughts on whether there were any teachers he trusted, “Well, I guess I could trust “Mr. Smith” he’s my social worker, but for me to trust a teacher, I would have to be able to talk to them and not have to worry about getting into trouble.”

Students were also questioned as to whether or not they participated in any extra-curricular activities at school. Here are their replies. Mitch responded, “I like football, but I just play with friends and not here at school.” Jasmine then replied, “I don’t play sports or any of that kind of stuff here.” Aaron also commented, “I don’t do anything here but I play football in the fall for “Smith Recreation Center. I like basketball, but I am not very good to play for here. I played it at my old school.” Julian shared, “I played football for “Smith Recreation Center, but

not here. I used to do plays at my old elementary school.” Wesley added, “I don’t play sports here and I don’t do any of the clubs, like that technology one, either.”

In summary, student responses and their answers to questions brought about their own thoughts on teachers and general school connectedness. Their own lack of connectedness to their school, teachers and other school personnel contributed to their lack of learning and engagement in the classroom.

“I don’t know...I don’t know...don’t know”: Students lack of understanding of their own learning.

A final theme to emerge from the data in this study was the lack of understanding students had of their own learning and /or learning style. Each interview session began with a set of general questions about the activities they chose to complete during that class session. Student choices varied from: clay modeling, drawing, creating tableaux to playing charades. These activities were chosen because some had kinesthetic components, such as the tableaux, charades and clay modeling, while the drawing was more of a visual learning activity. I wanted to make sure that I had all three learning styles represented for each lesson we completed. During one session where students had the opportunity to choose the clay modeling station, in order to learn new vocabulary words from the current chapter, students shared their thoughts.

First, Mitch was questioned as to why he chose the clay modeling activity. He responded, “I like working with it. It’s fun. It was the only interesting one to pick.” He was asked a follow up question of what was it about working with the clay that was fun or interesting. He responded, “I don’t know. Just messin’ with it; not having to write.” Mitch was asked if he thought just messing with the clay helped him learn. He responded, “Hmmm. I don’t know.” Mitch was asked how he liked to learn new things. “I don’t know how I like to learn. The clay helps me to remember, but I’m not sure how.”

Jasmine, who also chose the clay modeling activity, shared, “I like to make things. Doin’ the clay makes me feel comfortable. That’s why I picked it.” She was asked how the clay made her feel comfortable. She responded, “I don’t know.”

Aaron also chose the clay activity. He added, “I picked the clay because it sounded fun.” He commented on what he thought was fun about the clay activity, by saying, “I don’t know what was fun about it.” When asked what kind of learning he thought was fun, he replied: “I don’t know.” He also commented “I don’t know.” in response to describing how he liked to learn new things.

In addition, Wesley also chose the clay modeling activity. He shared: “I thought it sounded fun and I am interested in it, so I picked it.” When asked what he thought was fun and interesting about it, he replied “I don’t know I just liked it. I don’t know why; I just am interested in it.” Wesley was asked how he liked to learn. He replied: “I don’t know.” He commented on whether or not he thought working with the clay helped him learn and remember better, “I don’t really know. I guess I just thought it sounded fun. It was just fun.” Next, he was asked if there was something he needed to learn for a test, what he did to learn it. He replied, “I don’t know. I just learn it. I like taking notes sometimes. I don’t really know why. I just like it.”

Students were also able to choose to complete visual learning stations throughout the course of this study. Typically, these stations involved drawing in some manner. During one of the class sessions, students were asked to draw their interpretation of the main character using idioms from the chapter. Julian chose to complete the drawing activity. He was questioned as to why he chose the drawing activity and he replied, “Because I like to draw.” He commented on why he liked to draw, “I don’t know, I just like to draw. I draw what comes into my mind. It

makes me feel calm.” He was then asked how he liked to learn new things, like for a test. “I don’t know. Sometimes when I read I like to picture it. Is that like learning?”

Aaron also chose the drawing activity. He commented on why he chose the activity, “Because it’s easy. I like to draw instead of writin’.” He was asked how the drawing activity was easy, he replied, “I don’t know, it’s just easy.” Aaron continued to comment on how he liked to learn new things by saying, “I don’t know. I never thought about it.” When asked if he remembered things better when he saw a picture, he replied, “Hmmm...I’m not sure.”

In addition, students were also able to choose to complete auditory learning stations throughout the course of this study. These auditory learning stations generally involved group discussions, one on one discussion, or listening to tape recordings. Students discussed their thoughts on the leadership qualities of the two main characters in the novel in a large group discussion session. However, prior to that discussion, students came to the white board and wrote the two main characters’ traits on the board. Once the overall discussion was complete, students shared their answers.

When asked what his thoughts were on the activity, Mitch responded, “Yes, I liked it. I don’t know why I liked it. I just liked it.” Next, Jasmine responded, “No, I did not like it.” When she was asked why she did not like it, she responded, “Hmmm, I don’t know.” The she was asked if she thought there was some other activity that might have worked better, she replied, “I don’t know.”

To summarize, students shared their thoughts on a variety of learning activities throughout this study. Their responses to questions drove much of the interviews. Clearly, students’ lack of their own understanding of learning and evaluation had a negative impact on their overall learning and lack of engagement in the classroom.

Overall, three themes emerged throughout the course of this study. They were: the importance of active learning in the classroom, the need for school connectedness and students' lack of understanding and evaluation about their own learning. In the following chapter, conclusions and recommendations will be made.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

When I began this action research project, I was a special education teacher, who worked with students who had emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. I often had students who were not very engaged in the classroom and I wanted to change that. I wanted a classroom of students who were engaged in their own learning and it was because of this lack of student engagement that I witnessed, I wanted to find ways I could increase my students' engagement in the classroom. The information I found was based entirely on one small group of my students and was not a representative sample of the entire general student population. This chapter contains the conclusions and recommendations I drew from the data.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The Importance of Active Learning in the Classroom

Throughout the course of this study, students participated in a variety of lessons and each lesson had an active or kinesthetic component and a majority of the students chose to complete that component during each class session. Once I noticed this pattern developing, I changed the active/kinesthetic components so that students would not always have the same kinesthetic activity to choose. Once I made that change, I discovered that it did not matter what kinesthetic activity was available, students often chose that particular activity and spoke very highly of it during our interview sessions. More specifically, they spoke highly of the drama based kinesthetic learning activities. I also observed an increase in classroom engagement when students participated in kinesthetic learning activities; whether it was drama-based or some other kinesthetic component. All participants commented on how active learning made their own learning more meaningful and definitely more enjoyable.

Students gave a variety of reasons for choosing the kinesthetic learning components. One of the more consistent, and powerful, reasons was that if they had the opportunity to move around and let off some energy, they would not have to worry about getting into or causing trouble. This finding was of particular importance because we were on a schedule of ninety minute class sessions and kinesthetic activities are important when class sessions are of this length because they allow for a change of pace and movement. In addition, it was profound, to discover that students felt that kinesthetic activities allowed them to not have to worry about getting into trouble. If these types of kinesthetic learners were accommodated more, their overall learning would become more meaningful and they would have increased engagement in the classroom.

I recommend that active learning be incorporated into classrooms on a more frequent basis. For example, activities such as, role-plays, character enactments, tableaux, and charades can be incorporated into any subject area or grade level. Certainly what I had mentioned here were not the only options possible for drama activities and the limits were only confined by my own imagination. Besides drama, active learning can be incorporated by using smaller more hands-on based activities which involve the use of modeling clay, craft sticks, pencils, and drawing materials. Most teachers already have access to these things and I recommend that these be incorporated with greater consistency, particularly among older groups of students. Overall, I recommend that more kinesthetic activities be incorporated into the classroom in order to have an increase student engagement and more meaningful learning opportunities.

Conclusions and recommendations: The Need for School Connectedness

For the students who participated in the study, no matter how long they were in the education system, they brought with them their own experiences and general thoughts and attitudes about school and teachers. Throughout the course of this study, I discovered that these were factors that seriously impacted classroom engagement. One conclusion which I drew from this theme was that some students had negative school experiences and typically those experiences came from negative interactions, or perceived negative interactions, with teachers and other staff members. Students did not feel motivated to do well or actively engage in a classroom when they had negative experiences with teachers or teachers or schools. Positive relationships between students and teacher are important components of the classroom at any grade level. A positive relationship leads to trust and a positive relationship built between student and teacher yields a positive learning experience for all parties involved.

A second conclusion I drew was that students did not trust their teachers and school staff. Some of the neediest of students did not feel as if they could trust those who were directly responsible for their well-being for a significant portion of the day. In some cases, that lack of trust demonstrated itself by students being very suspicious of teachers' and school motives when it came to issues of the well-being of the child. Students brought up issues such as, schools and teachers have no place getting into the business of others, even when it comes to the well being of that student. Such things were considered "family" business and schools and teachers should stay out of "family" business.

A third conclusion, I drew was that some students perceive teachers as not liking them or not liking students in general. For instance, a teacher giving a student a failing grade was

perceived as the teacher not liking him or her. Students, in general, perceived disciplinary actions by teachers as being done without warrant or being done because a student was not liked.

A final conclusion I drew was, that students did not participate in school clubs or sports because of a lack of connectedness to their school. Students did, however, participate in clubs and sports in their local communities. All of these things impacted students' engagement in the classroom. Students demonstrated a strong lack of trust and dislike among teachers. This was what caused students to become disengaged in school and learning.

One significant recommendation that I had for students to begin to have a more positive image of teachers, was that teachers put forth greater effort in building trust with students. One way in which this was done, was to build strong student and teacher relationships. This was done by having strong daily interactions with students. Acknowledging the student, for example, is one way in which that was done. Simply, put, saying hello or good morning is an excellent place to start. Second, acknowledge what the students had done well on a daily basis. Third, get to know them. Ask about their weekends and holidays. Fourth, individualize instruction. Fifth, get to know what students enjoy in terms of hobbies, sports, movies, music. These things can also be creatively incorporated into daily lessons. Sixth, get to know about their individual backgrounds. Sixth, encourage students to participate in school sponsored sports and clubs by discussing and encouraging these things in the classroom. Building relationships with students will not happen in one or two days, but it can happen over time. In addition, teachers should talk to students and try to understand the students' perceptions of events that occur in the classroom in order to possibly prevent some of the misunderstandings that happen.

The overriding picture is how student interactions with teachers effect classroom engagement and impact student learning and if students do not have trust and positive interactions with teachers and/ or teaching staff, such as teaching assistants, they will walk into school each day with little or no motivation to be successful. Negative views on teachers mean that students are not able to build trust with teachers, particularly new teachers, and the lack of not having strong relationships with teachers effects their own motivation in the classroom, which results in poor motivation for school overall (Johnson, 2006). If students are not motivated in school, they will eventually leave school. Doing this has a serious impact on their future.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Students' Lack of Understanding and Evaluation about their own Learning

A majority of schools in the United States are still like factories, where masses of students come into the classroom, sit down and begin reciting exactly what the teacher has told them to recite. This has not helped in the development of students' higher order thinking skills. I did not give any consideration to the fact that students may not have had an idea of how they actually preferred to learn when designing this study.

The first conclusion I drew from this theme, was that students had no understanding of how it was they preferred to learn best. For example, I often asked students why they picked an activity. I was often given responses of "I don't know" to these questions. More frequently, I was given these types of response particularly when I asked follow up questions pertaining to whether or not students felt the activity helped them learn. Students who had no idea how they learned at even at the most basic level. However, this was not true of all of my students and some were able to give consistent answers on their preferred learning style.

A second conclusion I drew was, that students took little ownership for their own learning. Students often responded that they picked an activity because it sounded fun or that it was a fun activity to work on. Students did not say that engaging in an activity helped their learning. This was evidence that teachers were not doing enough to bring them along in helping them to discover their own learning style and to teach them the process of self-evaluation throughout their schooling. This self-evaluation of one's own learning is something that students need to know in order to be successful in school and the work place. Should students decide to go on to higher learning institutions, they will be responsible for their own learning. In the work place, they will be responsible for their own learning. It was obvious that students were not asked to evaluate their work or overall learning in general by teachers.

My first recommendation is that teachers begin the process of teaching students how to self-evaluate. By self-evaluation I mean that they begin to be taught the process of how to judge the quality of the work that they create based on specific criteria, but also that they begin to evaluate their own learning process. Students will need guidance from teachers in how to do this, but that guidance can be lessened once students became comfortable with the process of self-evaluation. One way in which to begin this process is to have a project in which the students and teacher create the criteria upon which the project is to be judged together. Teach students how to apply the criteria created to their project. Create these criteria with students for several projects so that students are comfortable with the process. Once they demonstrate that they can create criteria comfortably, give students another project. But for this project, have students independently create their own criteria on which they will be judged. Once they have created their own criteria for the project, have them judge their own work based on their criteria. These are good steps toward teaching the process of self-evaluation of their own work.

In summary, there were conclusions and recommendations for the three themes found in this study. Those themes were the importance of active learning in the classroom, the need for school connectedness and students' lack of understanding and evaluation about their own learning.

Chapter 6: Self-Reflection

It has been a long road to the completion of this project. There were times when I thought I would not finish it. But overall, the entire process was a learning experience and I can say with great certainty that I would be more comfortable taking on a similar project in the future. I have learned many things. One of those things was to always expect the unexpected. There were a lot of unexpected ideas that emerged. For instance, I did not consider the possibility that the themes that eventually emerged were even aspects to consider when I was creating the original design for the project. In that manner, it was a learning process. I had occasionally wondered what other themes would have emerged had I carried out the study for a longer period of time. Would there have been other themes that emerged anyway? After all, my data was at the point of saturation. I also thought about questions I asked students during the interview process and in looking back, felt as if I should have asked this question or that question. But, those are typical thoughts to have now that I have a finished product and can look back on the study as a whole. I did share some information with the students who participated in the study on their own learning styles. I hope that the information provided to them was beneficial and that they were able to carry their new knowledge with them as they moved into high school and beyond. However, the ultimate goal was to improve my own teaching practices. I was able to do this with the information I have found in this study.

I have learned that it is important to incorporate active learning in the classroom, especially for students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities. These students tend to learn in a kinesthetic manner; therefore, active learning helps them learn more of the material, but it also helps them to be more engaged in the classroom. In my current classroom, I have at

least one active learning component per day. My current students are partial to drama based activities.

I have also learned that it is crucial that students be connected to their teachers and their staff particularly for students who had become so disenfranchised with their entire education experiences. In my current classroom, I begin by having strong daily interactions with all of my students. I begin this process on the first day of school. Each student is greeted by me and my teaching staff. This is an important first step. As students enter the classroom, I am able to engage in small talk on a one to one basis with many of my students. This is how I learn about their hobbies and general interests in music and movies. Then, prior to the start of the work day, I engage in a whole group discussion with my class. It starts out rather simple, and that I ask each student what they did the previous night. Discussions generally go from this point onto tangents depending on the topic, but again, this has proven to be a strong starting point. I have found that students share more of their family dynamic during this time, particularly if we fit in current events of the day. This is also considered our morning meeting time. This can be done in any classroom.

I have learned that it is important to teach the process of self-evaluation to students. I have done this in my current classroom. For each social studies unit that we complete there is always one major project assigned. Collectively, we create a scoring rubric with criteria needed. My students always seem to enjoy this process. It definitely gives them a sense of empowerment. Then the criteria are used to judge their final projects. Occasionally, I have students fill out the scoring rubric themselves for larger projects or I may ask them to fill out the rubric for a classmate's project. But, when doing so, they also have to give a rationale for why they chose to judge the way they did. One thing is for certain and that is when the students are

involved in creating the criteria, arguments over final grades disappear. In smaller assignments, I have created a written check list for students. Students then fill out their own check list for the criteria on the assignment. I ultimately have a final say, as I also fill out the check list, but this has helped students be more evaluative on a daily basis. Students have been receptive to this, so far.

Overall this project has helped me to become a better teacher. I have a better understanding that teaching is more than just teaching students specific academic skills but also providing them with the skills they need to be successful once they have left the classroom. This certainly speaks volumes to the fact that teachers need to understand for themselves that they do more than teach content and teach it one way, but that more active learning needs to be incorporated into the classroom and that building strong relationships with students is an important factor in the education process and that teaching students how to self-evaluate and be reflective is a life skill.

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Appendix

Daily Lesson Plans

Lesson I: *Call of the Wild*: Chapter 1

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify where the story takes place.
2. Students will be able to identify at least two main characters from chapter 1.
3. Students will be able to label Buck's journey on a map in which they indicate at least two major locations.

Materials:

Picture flash cards for key words from chapter 1

North America Map

Encyclopedias (full volume set)

Colored pencils or markers

Plain white paper for Symantec map.

Chapter 1: "close quiz"

Call of the Wild

Cassette: *Call of the Wild*

Tape recorder

Sequence of Activities:

Pre-Reading journal activity: Students choose the topic in which they would like to write:

1. Describe your pet: kind, color, nice things your pet likes to do. How did you get this pet?
2. Describe a typical winter in Minnesota? What kinds of leisure activities do people like to do?

Activity 1: Word Sort Activity

Each student is given a set of cards from the key words table for chapter 1. There is a picture of the word on one side and the definition is typed on the other side. Have students sort the cards into categories. As a group do a Symantec map on the board. (Visual, Kinesthetic learners.)

Activity 2: Read chapter 1 (listen, as group to chapter on audio tape).

Activity 3: Mapping out Buck's journey: Students are given a map of North America. They are to use the encyclopedias to locate the following places on the map. (write these directions on board) (Visual Learners): Use the encyclopedias and label the following in their appropriate location on the map. Alaska, Santa Clara Valley, CA, Seattle, St. Paul, Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean. Then students label on the map Buck's first journey.

Closure/understanding: Close Quiz and completed maps.

Lesson 1: Component Parts.

The Call of the Wild: Chapter 1: Trouble for Dogs Like Buck

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Complete the questions below. Choose the best answer for the question. Write your answer in the space provided.

1. _____ had been discovered in Alaska

Oil, fish, dogs, ice, gold

2. Thousands of men were heading north with the dream of

(Building homes, getting fur, getting rich, swimming)

3. These men wanted _____ dogs with strong muscles, and

long fur to _____ in the snow and ice.

(play, jump. Work, run, catch balls.)

4. At this time, a dog named Buck lived in sunny Southern California in a

_____ country home owned by his master, Judge Miller. (small, cruel, cold, dark, large).

5. Buck went wherever he wanted because he was the king of the whole place. He went on long walks through _____
(the train station, the fields, the house, the snow, the city.

Lesson 2:

Lesson 2: *Call of the Wild*: Chapter 2: Idioms.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe at least two main events in chapter 2.
2. Students will be able to match or describe two key idioms in the chapter with the appropriate definition.

Materials:

KWL Chart

Pens/pencils/markers

Idioms worksheet

Idioms answer sheet.

Drawing paper

Call of the Wild

Cassette tape of novel

Sequence of Activities:

1. Writer's Notebook: Describe what it means to be bullied? Describe how you can stand up to a bully without using violence?
2. Review/Reinforcement of Chapter 1: Each student is given a copy of the KWL Chart. Teacher draws chart on board or on the overhead projector. The teacher then asks "what do we know about this book so far?" Teacher writes down student answers as they are given. Students copy answers on their KWL's as teacher writes them on the master chart.

Students listen to the book on tape and follow along in their book copies. Students and teacher then go back to the KWL and add new information learned.

Teacher then describes idioms: phrases that are like slang and used to describe events and/ or happenings. i.e. pulling a leg, and so on. List some idioms from chapter 2 on the board. Ask if students can give a meaning of the idioms.

Choice Activities: Students will choose from the following learning stations:

1. Idioms matching worksheet
2. (Visual): Students select two idioms from the master sheet and create a drawing of their meanings.
3. (Auditory/Kinesthetic): Create a song about what happened to Buck using the idioms from the master sheet.

Closure: Students will write an answer to the following question: Tell the teacher what you liked about the activities we did today. Tell the teacher what you did not like about the activities we did today.

Understanding: Completed activities.

Lesson 2: Component Parts:
Idioms Worksheet: Call of the Wild

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Match the idiom/expression with its appropriate definition.

Idiom Phrases or expressions:

Madness burned in his eyes C. Beat the stuffing out of you

Learned your place D. One in ten thousand

E. Saw money pass between them.

Definitions:

_____ This phrase means his eyes looked very angry.

_____ This phrase means Buck learned who was in charge.

_____ This phrase means Buck is a very special dog.

_____ This phrase means that one person gave money to another person.

KWL Chart: Call of the Wild:

What do we know

What do we predict

What did we learn

Lesson 3:

Lesson 3: Chapter 3 *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

Students will be able to state two or more character traits of at least one of the main characters from the novel.

Materials:

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild (audiocassette)

Tape Recorder

Writing paper

Pens/pencils/colored pencils

Drawing paper

Sequence of Activities

Activity 1:

Writer's Notebook: Describe how you handle disagreements with friends?

Activity 2: Board Writing Review: Each student is given a dry erase marker. Then each student comes up to the board and writes what he/she remembers from the story up to this point. Teacher needs to ask probing questions.

Activity 3: Listen to Chapter 3 on audio tape. Students will follow along in their copies of the novel.

Activity 4: Choice Activities:

1.(Auditory) Rewrite chapter 3. Students will pretend that they are Buck and the other dogs are Buck's friends. Students would describe how they would handle things if they were Buck. How would their friends react? What would their friends be like. What would student's themselves do in the situation that Buck is in.

2. (Visual): Create a "Want Ad" for a sled dog. This want ad should include things that Buck is good at (up to this point). Buck is the Model and there needs to be more dogs like him. (Use what is known about Buck so far) Students and teacher create a list before activity starts.

Check for Understanding: completed activities.

Lesson 4:

Lesson Plan: Chapter 4 *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

Students will be able to identify at least 2 key characters in the story and describe at least one of the character's traits.

Students will be able to identify at least two key events in the story.

Materials:

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild (audiocassette)

Tape Recorder

Modeling clay

Writing paper

Pens/pencils/colored pencils

Drawing paper

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1:

Board Writing Review: Each student is given a dry erase marker. Then each student comes up to the board and writes what he/she remembers from the story up to this point. Teacher needs to ask probing questions.

Activity 2:

Listen to Chapter 4 on audio tape. Students will follow along in their copies of the novel.

Activity 3:

Clay Model (Kinesthetic) Use the following characters: Buck, Spitz, Man in red sweater to write a paragraph 5-8 sentences describing the traits of the character you choose. Then create a clay model of the character. The model should show these traits somehow.

Think of the model as a photograph.

Timeline (Visual) Create a timeline for the story. The timeline should include at least four pictures of key events so far. Each picture should have a caption describing the event.

Letter Writers (auditory) Write two letters to Buck. Describe what you would or would not do if you were Buck. Start letters with "Dear Buck" and end with Sincerely.

Check for Understanding: Completed Activities.

Lesson 5:

Lesson 5: Chapter 5: *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of character development in the novel by participating in character survey activity.

Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge base of the story, thus far, by participating in the whole group writing review activity.

Materials:

Dry erase markers

Plain white paper or notebook paper

Pens/pencils

Stool or chair

Call of the Wild

Audiocassette: Call of the Wild

Tape recorder

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Writer's notebook: Does the strongest and fastest person always get the gold? Why? Why/Why not?

Activity2: Students review on the board. Each student is given a dry erase marker. Give the students a few minutes to think of the major points of the story up to this point. Then each student comes to the board and writes things down as they remember them. Teacher questions for further understanding as students write.

Activity 3: Listen to chapter 5 on audiotape.

Activity 4: Each student will get a sheet of paper. Teacher then writes on the board, Character traits of the following: Buck, Spitz, and author. Students will then give off answers to some of the traits of each character. Teacher asks probing questions.

Activity 5: (Kinesthetic): Pass out the instruction sheet to each student. The entire class will read the instruction sheet together. Then each student will answer one of the following questions as if he/she were one of the characters listed above, and how would that character answer that particular question. Students will write out their responses but they must then give those responses to the entire class. Questions are:

Only the strongest person will win in the end?

To survive in the wild, you have to be a nice dog?

Activity 6: Complete the Survey. (Kinesthetic)

Understanding: Student responses to Activity 5.

Lesson 5: Component Parts:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Character Survey: Instructions:

This is a whole group activity. Come up to the front of the classroom and sit on the stool. You are going to become one of the characters listed from our classroom novel. You are going to answer one of the two questions as if you are either Buck, Spitz or the Author. How would one of them answer the specific questions. You want to base your answer on what you know about the character from the reading so far. See the example below from *The Catcher in the Rye*. The person is answering the question below as if they are the main character from the novel.

“All people are phoney” . I totally agree with this statement. (Student in role as Holden). Everyone is phoney. They all try to put on a show and pretend that they are something they are not. People to say they like stuff that they don’t. Like certain video games. I always say I like certain video games when I really don’t because I want friends to like me. People always pretend they make more money than they really do. I think all people are phoney.

Lesson 6:

Lesson 6: Chapter 6: *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

- Students will be able to define characteristics of a good leader.
- Students will be able to describe how the main character is or is not a good leader.
- Students will recognize good leaders in their daily lives.

Materials:

- Writing paper
- Drawing paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Audiotape: Call of the Wild
- Call of the Wild
- Dry Erase Markers

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Writer's Notebook: Are you a good leader? Why? Why not?

Activity 2: Each student is given a dry erase marker. Then students then come up to the board and write down things that they remember up to this point in the novel. Teacher will have to ask some probing questions in order to help trigger prior knowledge of the book.

Activity 3: Listen to the book on audio tape.

Activity 4: Choice Activities: Write the word **leadership** on the board. Next ask students about this topic. As probing questions ask: what are the qualities or traits of good leaders. Do you know of any good leaders? What is it that makes them good leaders? Who are some of the good leaders in our world today? Is Buck a good leader? Spitz? How? How not?

Choice Activities:

(Visual): Complete a poster drawing advertising on the need for a good leader. Qualities of a good leader should be included.

(Auditory): Students will create a jingle advertisement on the need for a good leader. The advertisement can rhyme or not. It is completely up to the student. Student must choose between the two.

Closure: Students will share their drawing or advertisement with the group.

Lesson 7:

Lesson 7: Chapter 7: *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

Students will be able to state definitions of new vocabulary words from the chapter by defining a minimum of three words through completed activities.

Materials:

Dry erase markers

Word Searches

Modeling clay

Tape recorder

Audiocassette: *Call of the Wild*

Call of the Wild

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Writer's Notebook: Does getting praise from others keep you motivated or get you motivated? Why? Why not? How?

Activity 2: Each student is given a dry erase marker. Students then come to the board and write things they remember from the previous six chapters. Probing questions are done at the onset to activate prior knowledge.

Activity 3: New Vocabulary words are written on the board for chapter 7 are introduced and reviewed.

Bend-a curve

Examined-looking at something in a careful way

Mournful-very sad

Staggered-moved in a shaky way.

Tended-taken care of

Unfastened-opened or unbuckled

Activity 4: Students listen to chapter 7 on audio tape and then follow along in their hard copies of the book.

Activity 5: Choice Activities: Students choose from the following:

Vocabulary Word Search (Visual) For this activity, students will fill in the blanks with the appropriate definition for the word. Then students will search for the word in the Word Find. When finished students will take out Accelerated Reader books and read quietly waiting for the teacher to come and interview them.

Vocabulary Talk-Aloud: (auditory) For this activity, students will take the master sheet of vocabulary words and read their meanings into a tape recorder. Then students will play

back the tape and listen to the definitions. Students will then write as many of the definitions as they remember on paper.

Vocabulary Clay Molding: (Kinesthetic) For this activity, students will use the modeling clay and mold out a minimum of 3 of the definitions. The sculpture or sculptures should show what the word means. Students may create a scene if they so choose.

Closure: Completed Activity.

Lesson 7: Component Parts:

Chapter 7: The Pride of the Trail

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Fill in the blank with the word that best describes the definition from chapter 7.

The words:

Bend

Examined

Mournful

Staggered

Tended

Unfastened

The Definitions:

To look at something in a careful way means _____

This word means very, very sad _____

This word means to move in a shaky way _____

A curve in the road means this word _____

This word means to take care of something _____

This word means to open or unbuckle _____

Now find the words in the word find on the next page.

SNCIYMKBASOIGCL
SAGTQDQSNJSODHN
SLKJSELYADXPISX
SYHHPMGXMWDFTOZ
FLWADGBWNQLQEXB
WEFNREOSFUCZUDB
ASBMXIDVFKTDPJF
BETDQTONRCLOSCF
GAHARAROELAOFUF
KMOKGUMXITPYQXR
MWTPOGPFXUGVRYT
EXAMINEDNEBUQVY

RXSOHRORWAXYOTN
WWVKABQFEGXVVFS
UNFASTENEDMRJLX

Bend
Examined
Mournful
Staggered
Tended
Unfastened

Lesson 8

Lesson 8: Chapter 8 “Rescued”

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate overall comprehension of the main events in the story by writing on the board what they remember.

Students will demonstrate comprehension by completing application level activities.

Materials:

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild: Audiocassette

Modeling Clay

Markers, colored pencils, blank paper.

Dry erase markers

Index cards

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Writer’s Notebook: Have you ever been camping? Describe it? What do you need to bring with you? If not, what do you think camping is like? Would you ever like to try it? Why? Why not?

Activity 2: Board Writing Review: Students come to the board and write all events he/she remembers from the story thus far.

Activity 3: Listen to chapter 8 on audio tape. Students follow along in their copies of the book.

Activity 4: Choice learning activities:

(Visual): For this activity, students will draw the items they think are needed for a wilderness survival kit. Students must have at least four items in their drawings. Students will then explain in a caption why they drew the item they did. This must be done for each item.

(Kinesthetic): For this activity, students will use the modeling clay and create the items they think they will need to survive in the wilderness. Students must have at least four items modeled. Then students will write on an index card explaining why they included the items they did.

(Auditory): For this activity, students will have a discussion with the teacher about which items they would include in their wilderness survival kits. Students must discuss at least four items needed for the survival kit. Students must also tell why they chose each item.

Lesson 9

Lesson 9: *Call of the Wild*: Chapter 9: For the Love of a Man.

Objectives:

Students will be able to define at least three key words from the table.

Materials:

Tape recorder

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild: Audio recording

Index cards

Colored pencils/markers

Scoring rubric

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Writer's Notebook: Do you have any loyalty to someone or something? Who or what is it? Would you do anything for this loyalty?

Activity 2: Board Writing Review: Students come to the board and write all events he/she remembers from the story thus far. In addition new key words are introduced at this time: Bank (river bank) Bar, brave, jealous, love names, recover, released, canyon floor.

Activity 3: Listen to chapter 9 on audio recording. Students will follow along in their copies of the novel.

Activity 4: Choice Activities:

(Kinesthetic) Charades: For this activity, students will choose 3-4 of the definitions for the key words and play charades in front of the group. Students should be reminded not to speak in Charades. Use only body gestures to show meaning.

(Visual): Picture Game: For this activity, students will create a picture game using the key words from the chapter. Students can create more words in order to make their game work. For example, if a student wanted to do a compare and contrast game, students would need to have more words than are listed on the chapter list of key words. Create a game board, pieces and so on. They should show that students understand the meaning of the words.

(Auditory): Create a song: For this activity, students will create a song or rap using as many words from the list as possible. Students can add more words so that their song will make sense. Songs should be typed on the computer. Violence or inappropriate words are not allowed.

Understanding: Completed scoring rubric.

Lesson 9: Component Parts

Scoring Rubric:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Activity Choice: _____

_____ Used 3-4 words from vocabulary list

_____ Worked well in preparation.

_____ Was cooperative

_____ Completed Activity Project shows knowledge of vocabulary words.

Novice: Needed constant adult assistance. Did not demonstrate any understanding.

2. Beginner: Needed some adult assistance and at least one reminder.

3. Experienced: needed no assistance or reminders. Followed expectations completely.

Lesson 11:

Lesson11: Chapter 11: *Call of the Wild*

Objectives:

Students will be able to define a minimum of three vocabulary words from the chapter.

Materials:

Pens/pencils/colored pencils/markers/dry erase markers

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild (audiocassette)

Index Cards

Writing Paper

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Board Review: Each student is given a dry erase marker and then comes up to the board and writes everything he or she remembers about the story. Teacher should ask probing questions.

Activity 2: Listen to chapter 11 on audiotape. Have students follow along in their copies of the book.

Activity 3: (Choice Activities)

- A. Visual: Create flash cards of vocabulary words for the chapter. Create a picture of the word on one side and write the definition on the other side.
- B. Kinesthetic Create a frozen Tableau of at least three of the vocabulary words from the chapter. Perform the Tableaus for entire class.
- C. Auditory Create and advertising jingle for any household product using at least three of the vocabulary words from the chapter.

Check for understanding:

Completed activities.

Lesson 12:

Lesson 12: *Call of the Wild*: Chapter 12

Objectives:

Students will be able to summarize the events in the novel.

Materials:

Pens/pencils/colored pencils/markers

Call of the Wild

Call of the Wild (audiocassette)

Drawing paper

Writing Paper

Sequence of Activities:

Activity 1: Board Review: Each student is given a dry erase marker and then comes up to the board and writes everything he or she remembers about the story. Teacher should ask probing questions. Discuss how students think the book will end.

Activity 2: Listen to chapter 12 on audiotape. Have students follow along in their copies of the book.

Activity 3: (Choice Activities)

- A. Visual: Create a picture that contains a minimum of four scenes showing what happens to Buck throughout the story. Be sure to include descriptive captions for each scene.
- B. Kinesthetic Create a role play of the main events in the story and perform it for the class.
- C. Auditory: Retell the story into a tape recorder. Give as much detailed information as possible. Playback and type your summary on the computer.

Check for understanding: Completed activities.

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